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# **2019-2024 Strategic Plan**

**Ending Inequity,  
Transforming Lives**

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# Shaneeza Nazseer Ally

**Executive Director**



# Tamer Ibrahim

**Board Chair**

**LAST YEAR MARKED** For Youth Initiative's 25th anniversary of supporting Black, racialized, and newcomer youth of York South-Weston. Our plans to mark this incredible milestone were interrupted when Ontario declared a state of emergency as a result of the increasing transmission of COVID-19. During that time, FYI staff were determined to continue serving local youth as we had to reimagine our service model. Like many organizations across Toronto, our in-person programs and services moved online, where we continued to empower youth to identify and reach their personal goals, graduate high school, enrol in post-secondary education, and prepare for the workforce. With virtual programming available, FYI was unintentionally expanding its reach to new communities, opening its doors to many more young people seeking connection and support across the city.

As we launched our virtual programs and services, FYI was learning yet another difficult lesson about the barriers our young people face: getting one internet-connected device per household is tough and comes at a significant financial cost that is often out of reach.

Each phase of the pandemic brought new challenges and FYI continued to rise to the occasion. Two milestones in particular come to mind: On August 13, 2020, we celebrated 200 graduates of our Black Youth Leadership Program and heard first-hand from youth about how transformative this experience has been for them. Secondly, our Future Fund campaign was successful in raising \$50,000 to give 25 scholarships out in the Fall, in part thanks to our donors as well as the support of a local

business, who helped by matching donations to this incredible campaign. 2020 was also a critical year of transition and growth. It was an exciting time for the leadership team, as new team members joined FYI to help increase our reach and impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the inequities it further exacerbated for the most vulnerable among us has cemented FYI's determination to increase the financial resources and support we extend to Black, racialized, and newcomer youth. We have also renewed our commitment to addressing racism and discrimination within the systems that should support youth but more often fail them and in some cases cause them great harm.

It's hard to believe that 26 years ago, FYI was a bold experiment by a small group of committed community leaders to create a safe and supportive space for local youth. Today, FYI has grown to be an advocate for youth within the education, settlement, employment, and justice systems. If this strategic plan is your introduction to our FYI, welcome! We hope you'll learn more about the work we do and how you can join us in our quest to end inequity and transform lives. To our allies and champions over the years, thank you for your support and for being part of FYI's ever-growing community of leaders and changemakers.

**Shaneeza Nazseer Ally,**  
Executive Director

**Tamer Ibrahim,**  
Board Chair

# A Message From Our Board Chair & Executive Director





# Vision, Mission, Values

## **Vision**

Ending the cycle of inequity

## **Mission**

Supporting Black, racialized and newcomer youth to navigate systemic barriers, plan for the future, and access the resources and mentorship they need to thrive

## **Values**

### **Equity**

We promote equal access to life's opportunities

### **Respect**

We treat each other with kindness, patience, and empathy

### **Inclusion**

We welcome everyone; diversity is our strength

### **Collaboration**

We work together, share, and learn from each other

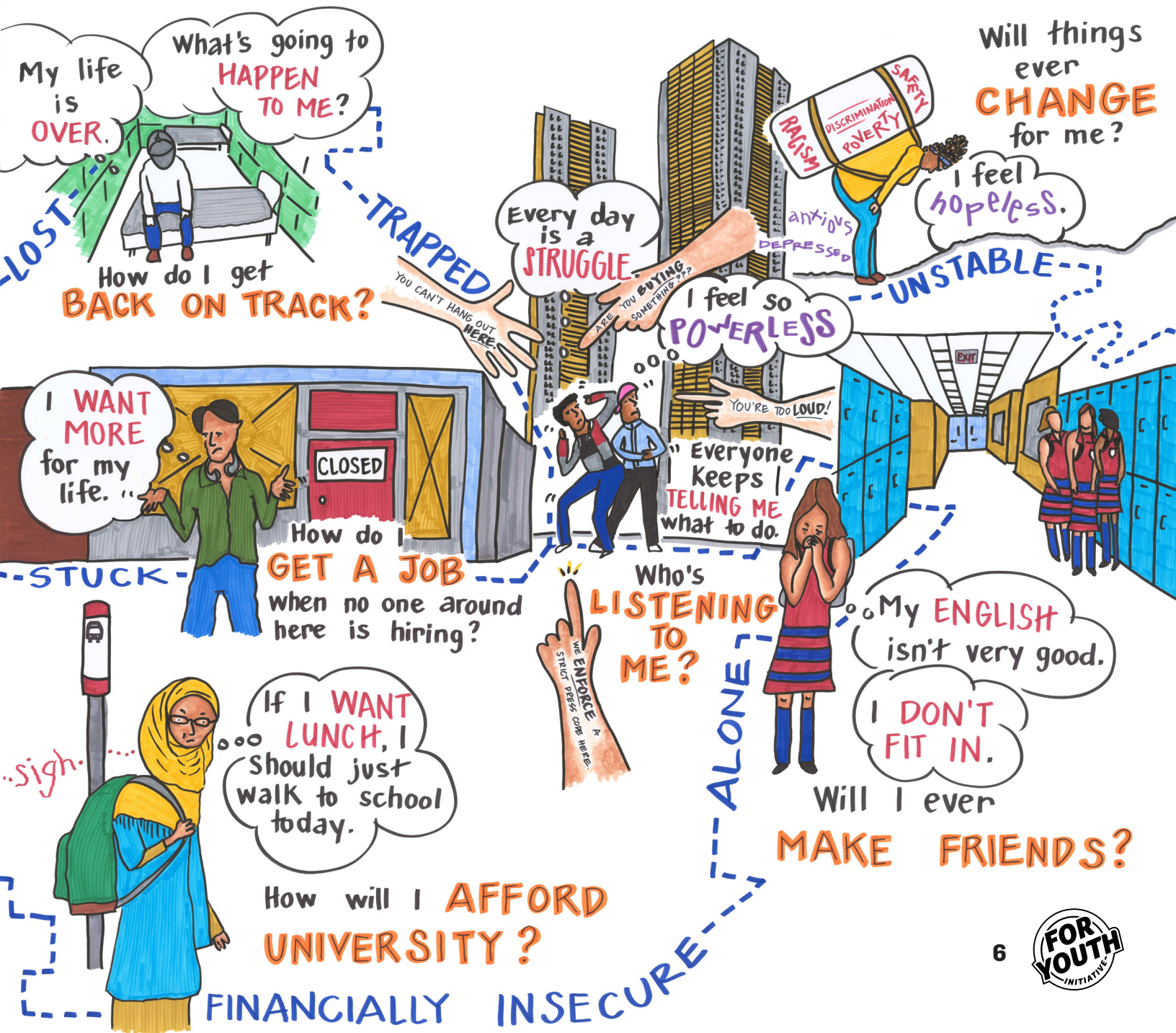
### **Integrity**

We demonstrate the courage to do what is right, not what is easy



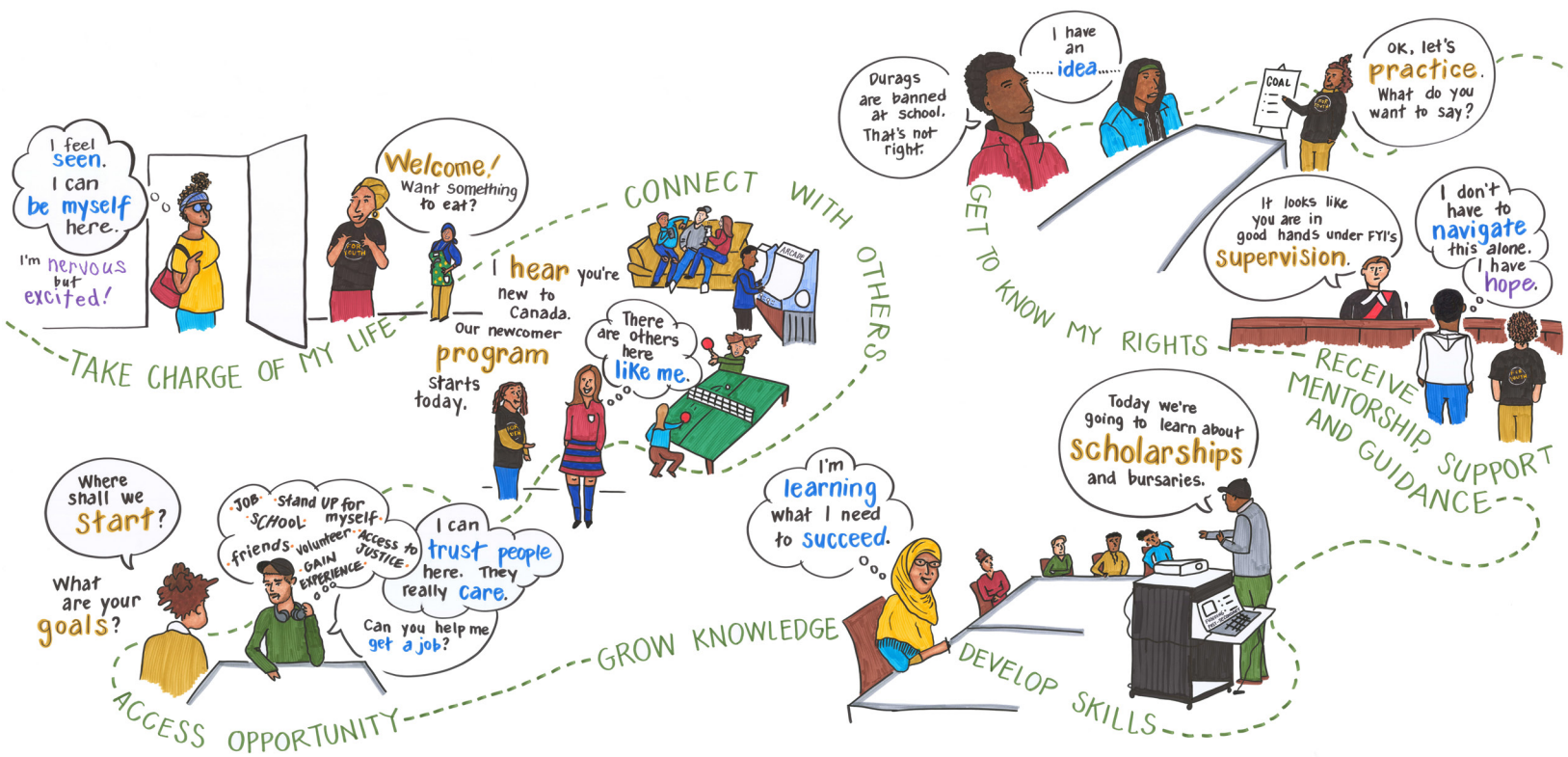
# Who We Serve

Every young person's journey is unique and their needs are too. For Youth Initiative has developed a deep understanding of how to best support these needs for the diverse populations of young people in the York South-Weston area. We support primarily Black, racialized, and newcomer youth with responsive and inclusive programs and services that meet individuals where they are and help them navigate the barriers to reach their highest potential. Utilizing a person-centred approach, we build life-long relationships with our community of young people and are committed to acknowledging and understanding their unique experiences and stories.



# What We Do

The FYI Model focuses on a young person as an individual, meeting them where they are and supporting them to get to where they want to be. Our programs are designed to support individual youth to identify and reach their personal goals, graduate high school, enrol in post-secondary education, gain employment and achieve independence. To reach these milestones we provide support via mentorship and resources in six key areas: educational attainment, workforce readiness, civic leadership, youth justice, newcomer settlement, and advocacy. Youth ages 12 to 29 can access these opportunities whether they are in or out of school, working or not.





# Our Impact

We walk alongside the emerging leaders of tomorrow with the vision that each young person is equipped to make healthy and informed choices, is confident in their future, and has a voice that matters in their community.







Doug

**FOR YOUTH**  
SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RECEIPT  
For Youth Initiative Presents  
**TAMAL BENJAMIN-JOHNSON**  
for their involvement in this community and  
their dedication to education  
SHANEZA HASSAN ALY  
BENEDICTO SAN JUAN

**Built  
For Youth,  
By Youth &  
With Youth.**



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# Strategic Plan Development Process

**FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE'S** 2019-24 Strategic Plan was developed collectively and in deep consultation with our clients, community partners, volunteers, funders, board members, and staff. The voices of the youth and families we serve and those involved with the organization are reflected in our strategic direction and vision.

**FIGURE 1.1.**

## Core Competencies

### Long-Term Youth Engagement

We successfully engage in long-term, trusting relationships with youth in our community; especially those whose access to opportunities are limited by poverty, geography, or social isolation.

### Youth Leadership & Self-Advocacy

FYI was built for youth, by youth and with youth. We provide the skills, tools, and platforms for youth to identify, communicate and meet their needs. Youth are sought for their input and hired for their expertise; they assume leadership positions and have decision making authority in program planning, recruitment, and governance.

### Person-Centered Approach

Every young person's journey is unique and their needs are too. Our case management model meets young people where they are and promotes self-reliance to identify their goals to get where they want to be.

### Agile & Responsive

We are young, tech-savvy, and adaptable. We continually seek input and feedback and are responsive to the changing needs of youth.

**IN LIGHT OF** COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement in response to continued violence perpetrated against the Black community - both of which have had profound impact on the communities For Youth Initiative serves - we have revisited and reiterated our strategic development process and plans. Our core competencies enable us to consider the significant impacts of these events in the careful determination of our objectives.

Our 2019-2024 strategic plan builds upon our impact from our previous strategic plan with a renewed, responsive, and refined focus on the sustainability of our organization to meet the priorities and needs of our youth communities.

FIGURE 1.2.

## 2019-2024 Strategic Plan Development Process



FIGURE 1.3.

## Evolution of For Youth Initiative

### Startup | 1995-2008

- Hyper-local focus on serving youth in Weston and Mount Dennis communities
- Implemented a broad range of programs in response to community need to fill void of local youth programming

### Expansion and Capacity-Building | 2008-2016

- Renovated and established home for youth centre at Keele Community Hub
- Supported by multiple funders to provide mentorship, capacity building and administrative support to grassroots groups and youth-led initiatives
- Doubled in size due to increased focus on newcomer settlement and youth justice brought on by increased funding for those specific community needs

### Focus and Sustainability | 2016-2024

- Prioritized focus on improving youth education and employment outcomes as a means of addressing social and racial inequalities
- Revamped service delivery model to offer individualized in-house case management support and strengthen community partnerships for virtual and on-site program delivery
- Expanding culturally-relevant and trauma-informed programming and staff capacity to serve Black, racialized and newcomer youth
- Building internal capacity for evaluation, digital communications and fundraising for greater sustainability



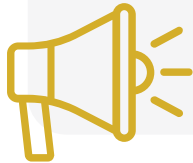


**Work to Ensure We  
Promote a  
Greater  
Understanding  
of Youth  
Experiences.**

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# Strategic Priorities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:  
**Enhance Stakeholder  
Engagement &  
Communications**



**ENHANCING FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE'S** online presence and meaningful engagement with its community is critical to ensuring our programs, services, and advocacy efforts reflect the unique and evolving needs of the youth we support. We will work to ensure that we continue to initiate and contribute to important conversations that propel systems change and promote greater understanding of youth experiences within the sector.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:  
**Optimize Service  
Delivery Model**



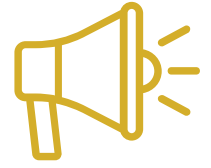
**FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE'S** growth as an organization colliding with the arrival of COVID-19 has meant that optimizing our service delivery model at this time is necessary to deepen and expand our impact. We will draw from the data we have collected and work to utilize data from future programs to ensure our service model is evidence-based, responsive, and holistic.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:  
**Create Long-Term  
Sustainability**



**OUR LONGEVITY AS** an organization rests on our ability to adapt through changes in funding and leadership, as well as our efforts to work collaboratively with our knowledgeable network of partners and stakeholders. Over the next few years we will make intentional efforts to strengthen the foundations of For Youth Initiative to allow for growth at a healthy pace that is both ambitious and realistic.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1:

# Enhance Stakeholder Engagement & Communications

### Objective 1:

**To enhance our digital communications capacity and strategy**

#### Outcomes

- Digital engagement strategy is created and implemented
- Digital content reflecting the voices and priorities of the youth we serve is created and distributed
- Outreach tools articulating our work and theory of change are developed and utilized across digital communication platforms
- Digital engagement increased across social media platforms
- Standardized communication tools across communication platforms are available and utilized for communication and events
- Consistency in transparency about our work to the broader community is increased

### Objective 2:

**To engage consistently with community and sector stakeholders to support Black, racialized, and newcomer youth**

#### Outcomes

- FYI alumni, parents, and the broader community are engaged in our work as volunteers, donors and members
- Year-round calendar of events and opportunities for community engagement established
- Enhanced communication with youth, families, program partners, community members, and funders to inform program and service delivery

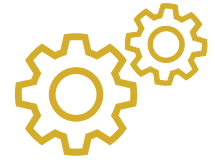
### Objective 3:

**To leverage our network of allies and position in the sector to advocate for systems change**

#### Outcomes

- Policy briefs created to advocate for policy reform for education, youth justice systems, and the youth serving sector
- Program reports are created to strengthen evidence-based practice and elevate community knowledge
- Consistently maintained a voice and presence in the community as a means of advocating and elevating youth voices
- Created new partnerships and strengthened existing relationships with community partners





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2:

# Optimize Service Delivery Model

### Objective 1:

**To measure program and service quality and effectiveness and to share with relevant stakeholders**

#### Outcomes

- Evaluation plan is created to measure program and organizational outcomes
- Customized evaluation tools are created and implemented for all FYI programs
- Standard practices effectively capture and analyze all relevant data and outcomes
- Organizational impact is shared consistently with the community in multiple accessible formats

### Objective 2:

**To expand our program and service options to meet current and emerging needs of the youth we serve as well as the community and stakeholders that support them**

#### Outcomes

- Consultations and Youth Town Halls are held to determine current and emerging needs of youth and the community
- Consistent and sustainable programming and case management meet the needs of youth and are delivered in partnership with community
- New opportunities established to serve youth through in-person and virtual programming

### Objective 3:

**To deepen our partnerships and networks in education, settlement, civic leadership, workforce readiness, and youth justice to enhance the individualized support services we provide to youth**

#### Outcomes

- New community partnerships created and existing relationships are strengthened to deliver programming
- Referral partnership networks are developed for all areas of focus
- Case management process and training is responsive and person-centred



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3:

# Create Long-Term Sustainability

### Objective 1:

**To secure increased core administrative and multi-year program funding**

#### Outcomes

- Consistent funding for programs that meet organizational goals is obtained
- Core and administrative funding is increased
- Expand and diversify sustainable income generation strategies
- Shared services, mergers, and joint governance structures are explored to expand and sustain organizational capacity

### Objective 2:

**To secure more long-term and sustainable partnerships**

#### Outcomes

- Organizational partners complement core organizational programming and strategic objectives
- Partnerships established with organizations that actively champion and amplify each other's programs and advocacy
- Partnership evaluation process developed to monitor quality and effectiveness of the partnership
- Partnerships established where there is a mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise in striving for greater equity for Black, racialized, and newcomer youth

### Objective 3:

**To refine leadership succession and team transition processes**

#### Outcomes

- Succession plans implemented for Board and Senior Management roles
- Diversity and inclusion policies are reviewed and refreshed
- Annual report of staff and board member diversity is created
- Greater knowledge retention and transfer between staff transitions is achieved
- Established increased training and professional development opportunities for staff



**FOR 26 YEARS,** For Youth Initiative has continued to be an integral part of a young person’s journey to adulthood and becoming a leader in their community.

Our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan illustrates our dedication as an organization to work to better the livelihoods and futures of the youth in our community. We will use it to keep our operations and actions as an organization in alignment with the impact we hope to make. We are committed to remaining responsive and evolving to meet the changing needs of the diverse young people we serve.





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